

VZCZCXRO7999
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0245/01 0831039

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 241039Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2010
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3007

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1305
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3346
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2732
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000245

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS SET FOR JULY 23

REF: A. BISHKEK 236
B. BISHKEK 235
C. BISHKEK 170

BISHKEK 00000245 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Kyrgyzstan's Parliament has set Thursday, July 23, as the date for the next presidential election. Parliament acted following a Constitutional Court ruling that the election must be held no later than October 2009. President Bakiyev was elected in July 2005, supposedly to a five-year term. However, the Court ruled that under the 2003 version of the Constitution, which was in effect when Bakiyev was elected, the term ends on the last Friday of October during the fifth year of his term. Under the current constitution, Bakiyev's term would have been five full years, ending in July 2010. While the Court's action appears to shorten Bakiyev's term, the decision and timing for the election was undoubtedly dictated by the Presidential Administration. Many analysts had predicted that Bakiyev would opt for an early election in order to take advantage of some of the expected \$450 million in Russian financial assistance (Ref C) as a campaign fund. End Summary.

Election in July

12. (SBU) In February, President Bakiyev announced at a press conference that he intended to run for a second term, either this year or next, depending on the decision of the Constitutional Court. Opposition Social Democrat MP Asylbek Jeenbekov subsequently petitioned the Constitutional Court to formally consider the question of the length of Bakiyev's term.

13. (SBU) On March 19, the Constitutional Court ruled that the 2003 version of the Constitution, which was in effect when Kurmanbek Bakiyev was elected President in July 2005, governed the length of his term. The Court ruled that under the 2003 version, the term ends on the last Friday in October during the fifth year of his term -- that is, on October 30,

¶2009. The Court further ruled that the election must occur by October 25. (Note: Under the current version of the Constitution, Bakiyev's term would have been five full years, ending in July 2010. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) The following day, on March 20, Parliament approved a bill setting the election for Thursday, July 23. A Parliamentary spokesperson said that in setting the date, which meets the Election Code's requirement of four months' advance notice, Parliament had allowed sufficient time following the polling for the Constitutional Court to issue an opinion on the validity of the elections, and the potential need for a second round of elections, before the President's term ends in October. Previous national elections have been held on Sundays, but a recent change to the Election Code eliminated that requirement.

¶5. (U) According to the Election Code, after the election has been announced, parties can nominate candidates up until 65 days prior to the election, or until May 19. Individuals may also nominate themselves within this time frame.

Ak Jol to Nominate Bakiyev

¶6. (SBU) In advance of the ruling Ak Jol Party Congress announced for April, an Ak Jol deputy leader in Parliament, Raisa Sidorenko, predicted that Bakiyev would win his party's nomination, saying that "the nomination of the incumbent President is the basis of political, economic and social stability in Kyrgyzstan, therefore it will surely be unanimously supported by the Party members." Ak Jol MP Tabyldy Orozaliyev was similarly confident in the President's

BISHKEK 00000245 002.2 OF 002

ability to shape events, telling the press that "the country's every significant achievement is associated with Kurmanbek Bakiyev. I think that one should be confident that the incumbent president will win." Ak Jol commentators cited the President's acceptance of the curtailment of his term by a year as evidence of his democratic credentials, and the unjustness of the opposition's criticisms.

How Many Opposing Bakiyev?

¶7. (SBU) On March 23, the United People's Movement, an umbrella group of some opposition parties, announced that their members had agreed to nominate a single candidate to represent all of their organizations. In comments to the press, opposition leaders Azimbek Beknazarov and Bakyt Beshimov did not rule out the possibility that they would be presidential candidates, although they both deferred to the UPM's decision regarding a candidate. Ata Meken leader Omurbek Tekebayev, generally considered the opposition's front runner, did not comment publicly on his own candidacy plans, but did say that his party "is the most efficient political organization in Kyrgyzstan," and that it would "fight against Bakiyev's regime."

¶8. (SBU) Among non-Ak Jol, non-opposition parties, former Prime Minister Felix Kulov told the press that he was undecided whether he would run, and that the question would be decided by a congress of the Ar-Namys party, which he heads. Communist Party leader Iskhak Masaliyev was equally non-committal, saying that he intends to run for President some day, but that his party would hold a meeting to determine what candidate to support, and that he does not intend to nominate himself.

Comment

¶9. (C) The announcement of an early election does not come as a surprise. It follows the pattern set in 2007 when Bakiyev called for a snap referendum on a new version of the

Constitution that increased his powers, and immediately followed up with snap Parliamentary elections that were rigged to give his Ak Jol party 71 out of 90 seats. Bakiyev presumably sees benefit in holding the polls this summer, by which time the dissatisfaction over wintertime power shortages will have dissipated, and by which time he hopes to have the promised Russian financial assistance at his disposal. While the Constitutional Court may appear to have shortened Bakiyev's term, the Court's decision and the timing for the election were undoubtedly dictated by the Presidential Administration.

¶10. (C) Having endured a tough winter of rolling power outages -- and avoiding possible unrest over a lack of heat and electricity -- Bakiyev and his family have calculated that holding elections sooner rather than later will keep the opposition off balance, and secure his re-election before the full effects of the global financial crisis have hit the country, and before having to face another winter that will likely be characterized by continued hardship and power outages. We have every reason to expect that this campaign will be as deeply flawed as was the 2007 Parliamentary election.

GFOELLER